

WILDLIFE DIVERSITY E-NEWSLETTER
Vol. 4, No. 1, January 2005
Jeff Vonk, Iowa DNR Director
Dale Garner, Wildlife Bureau Chief

NEWSLETTER FORMAT CHANGES by Doug Harr, WDP Coordinator

Because our text-only email newsletters contain much information, and many people prefer not to read lengthy emails, we are looking for better ways to serve our readers. In addition to this text-only newsletter, the DNR Wildlife Diversity Program (WDP) Newsletter also soon will be available as a .pdf file. The .pdf edition will contain additional graphics and other information not found in the all-text edition. For this first newsletter of 2005, the .pdf version soon may be downloaded from the Wildlife Diversity web page at www.iowadnr.com/wildlife/files/divers. We expect that future WDP email newsletters may be sent with an attached .pdf version. Most computer users are likely familiar with .pdf files, which may be opened and read with Adobe Reader (available as a free download at www.adobe.com).

+++++

GOOD NEWS FOR WILDLIFE DIVERSITY FUNDING By Bruce Ehresman, WDP Biologist

For the first time since the inception of the Chickadee Checkoff over 20 years ago, Iowa's Wildlife Diversity Program will be receiving additional dedicated funding to nongame wildlife. Thanks to the action of Senator Mary Lundby and the Iowa General Assembly earlier this year, fees will be raised for Iowa's popular Natural Resource vehicle license plates. Cost of new Natural Resource license plates will increase in January, 2005, as will the cost of registration for those already owning the plates. The money generated from these increases will be used to benefit Iowa's 557 nongame species. The remaining cost of these plates will continue to be used for Iowa's Resource Enhancement and Protection (REAP) program. There are currently over 50,000 Iowans displaying the familiar goldfinch and wild rose license plates.

The new income generated from the Natural Resources license plate cost increase will now go the Wildlife Diversity Program to act as match for federal funds received from the State and Tribal Wildlife Grants Program (STWG). Since 2001 this federal program has provided about \$770,000 to Iowa annually, which must be matched dollar-for-dollar by state or private partner funds. Since Iowa's WDP is one of the most underfunded programs within the DNR's Conservation and Recreation Division Bureau, these additional dollars will be crucial to providing this required financial match. Below are examples of Iowa projects associated with these STWG matched funds:

- Protected 240 acres of habitat for rare Greater Prairie-chickens at Kellerton Bird Conservation Area in southwest Iowa.
- Protected a Bald Eagle winter roost site below Red Rock Dam in Marion County. This site hosts up to 250 eagles each winter.
- Protected 80 acres of oak-hickory timber for neotropical migrant songbirds and endangered Indiana bats at Stephens State Forest, southeast of Des Moines.
- Protected 508 acres of riparian grassland, wetland and woodland habitat along the Middle River southeast of Des Moines, for declining birds, reptiles and amphibians.
- Initiated a research project to learn more about the home ranges and movements of Iowa's secretive bobcats.
- Initiated research on bird and bat interactions with a new wind energy generation facility situated between three important public wildlife areas in north central Iowa.
- Initiated research on bird use of habitats at the Spring Run Bird Conservation Area in northwest Iowa and in the northern Loess Hills.
- Initiated an inventory of reptiles and amphibians on the Lower Cedar and Iowa Rivers.
- Republished the popular booklet, "A Guide to the Bats of Iowa".

Wildlife Diversity Program staff are excited about the potential use for this new funding. It will provide more opportunities for wildlife research, species restoration, and habitat management and protection. Wildlife supporters who do not already have this attractive specialty plate are encouraged to buy one. To purchase it, motorists need to take their old plates and registration to their county treasurer. Treasurers will send their annual renewal notices after that. The plate also makes a great present, and you can go on-line at www.getyourtags.com for a gift application form. The same web site can be used to renew plates, as well.

+++++

2005 BALD EAGLE EVENTS By Pat Schlarbaum, WDP Natural Resource Technician

The 2004 Midwinter Bald Eagle Survey totaled 4432 eagles over-wintering in Iowa. Kelly McKay from Rock Island provided an outstanding count along Mississippi River. During the summer over 175 eagle pairs nested along Iowa rivers and lakes. This winter Bald Eagle Appreciation activities are planned to showcase our national symbol with entertainment geared for the whole family at numerous sites around the state. Events are hosted by County Conservation Boards, local Audubon chapters, US Army Corps of Engineers, and Iowa Department of Natural Resources. Telescopes and/or

binoculars will be available for outdoor viewing at most events. More details for each event may be found in the .pdf version of this newsletter.

Quad Cities Bald Eagle Days

Saturday and Sunday, January 8-9, starting 10 AM daily
QCCA Expo Center, 2621 4th Avenue, Rock Island, Illinois
For more information contact the Mississippi River Visitor Center
309/794-5338 or Dave Burrows 563/441-5695

Clinton Bald Eagle Watch

Saturday, January 8, exhibits open at 9AM
Free bus service from Clinton Community College to the outdoor viewing area.
For more information call: 815/259-3628

Dubuque Bald Eagle Watch

Saturday, January 8, exhibits open at 9AM
Indoor location: Grand River Center - Port of Dubuque
For more information call: 563/556-4372

Mississippi River Visitor Center, Rock Island (IL)
Combined eagle watch and Clock Tower tours
January 15, 2005 - February 20, 2005 Weekends Only
Reservations required. Group size is limited.
Call 309/794-5338

Muscatine Eagle Watch

Saturday, January 15, programs start at 9:30 AM
Indoor and Outdoor location at the Pearl City Station
For more information call: 563/263-7913

Keokuk Bald Eagle Days

Saturday (9:30 AM) and Sunday(10AM), January 15-16
Indoor programs and Environmental Fair at Keosippi Mall, Keokuk, Iowa
For more information call: 319/524-5599

Jackson County Eagle Watch, Bellevue

Sunday Jan. 16
9AM Lampe's True Value and Riverview Park
1-4 PM Indoor programs at Bellevue Elementary
For more information call: 563-652-3783

LeClaire Bald Eagle Watch

Saturday and Sunday, January 22-23, starting at 10AM
Indoor programs: Mississippi Valley Welcome Center
For more information call: 563/322-3911 x120

Burlington Eagle Watch

Saturday January 29
10AM – Noon
Port of Burlington Welcome Center
For more information call: 319-753-8260

Quincy Bald Eagle Watch

Sunday, January 30
Outdoor viewing at Quincy City Park: 10AM – 4PM
For more information call: 217-228-0890

Red Rock Eagle Watch

Saturday Feb. 19
Outdoor viewing at Iron Bridge downstream from dam
Indoor programs: Pella Community Center 9AM – 4PM
For more information call: 641-828-7522

Saylorville Eagle Watch

Sunday Feb. 27
Saylorville Visitors Center is place to start at Noon – 4PM
For more information call: 515-276-4656

+++++

FROG AND TOAD SURVEYORS RECEIVE DNR RECOGNITION

By Mark McInroy, WDP Natural Resource Technician

The Iowa Frog and Toad Call Survey has been all-volunteer since 1991. Since inception, tnearly 100 different volunteers have submitted observations from all around the state. Given operational restrictions within the WDP, these volunteers continue to provide data vital to conservation in Iowa. With wildlife management staff time being stretched on our public lands, and the WDP program budget being so little, it is truly critical to coordinate a survey such as this through volunteers. The WDP is indebted to their diligent, loyal, and professional support.

While this survey has been conducted for 13 straight years, it is of particular noteworthiness that several volunteers have been involved the last 10 years. It is this perennial and loyal group that were acknowledged by the DNR- Keepers of the Land as the Outstanding Volunteer Group and the Director's Choice award for 2004.

Here's why F&T Survey volunteers are so important to the state of Iowa. With at least 50 surveys submitted each year, multiplied by an average of 4 hours per submitted survey, times 13 years, equals some 2600 hours of total time spent conducting this survey by volunteers since inception. This is equivalent of one full-time staff for one and a half years. Calculating value for time, mileage, and equipment provided by volunteers, their efforts provide about \$6000 worth of services annually.

The 1990's discovered several declining species of frogs and toads as well as unexplained malformations. Surveys such as this were created to get a better idea of this group of wildlife. As with most research efforts, the last decade has discovered some answers and uncovered newer questions. More recently several species of frogs and toads are of special concern in Iowa as well as the upper Midwest region. The data compiled from this survey aids many agencies and researchers in monitoring population trends and creating management plans.

+++++

SWAN PROGRAM MARCHES INTO THE FUTURE

By Ron Andrews, Trumpeter Swan Restoration Coordinator

Trumpeter Swan restoration in Iowa began in 1995 after obtaining approval from the Mississippi Flyway Technical Section to move forward. Thanks to the enormous participation from the public our restoration efforts are unique when comparing them to other Midwest states. We compare most closely with the province of Manitoba but our public partnership involvement is more magnanimous than theirs. We have over 50 partnership pairs scattered across the state of Iowa, where people are basically "footing" the bill to hatch and rear trumpeters for us to release into the wild. Over 3 dozen swan shepherds either have been or are currently taking care of a pair of trumpeter swans. We have had 19 corporations/businesses involved as partners. Nearly 2 dozen County Conservation Boards have or are assisting with trumpeter swan restoration. Four schools have partnered up with us. Several Iowa wildlife management units and park facilities have jumped on the trumpeter swan bandwagon. Over a dozen zoos nationwide have been, or currently are, supplying us with trumpeter swans. We have also connected with nearly 3 dozen states who have help us out in some fashion with our restoration efforts. Collectively these partners have allowed the DNR to produce over 100 cygnets and release nearly as many each year. With that sort of help and momentum how could Iowa's Trumpeter Swans Restoration Project not be marching forward.

Historically, the last trumpeter swans nested in Iowa in 1883 on the Twin Lakes wildlife area which is about 9 miles northwest of Belmond, IA. In 1998, our first modern day trumpeter swans nested on a private farm pond near Epworth, IA. In 1999 still only one nest at the same private pond in Dubuque County. In 2000, we "broke the ice" and had our first true wetland nesting trumpeter swan pair on Winnebago County Conservation, Thorpe Park about 9 miles west of Forest City, IA. So we were off to a tortoise type march as far as our nest attempts are concerned. In 2001, trumpeter swan nest attempts exploded to 9 in number. 2002 brought only 1 additional nest attempt bringing the total to 10. Thirteen free flying trumpeter swans attempt to nest in 2003. Our initial goal was to have 15 wild trumpeter swan nests by 2003 and we had 13 attempts. We then established a new goal of 25 nests by 2006.

2004 brought a new weather challenge for our nesting trumpeters. Monsoonal rains, fell just at the wrong time in May and June and drowned out a few nests before we could determine the actual number of attempts. One known nest attempt at Mallard Marsh was flooded out and we speculate that at least 2, and probably more, flooded out elsewhere in the state. With that in mind, we believe that there likely were at least 15 free flying nests attempts in the Iowa in 2004. We do anxiously await to see what 2005 may bring as far as nesting trumpeters in Iowa are concerned. Interestingly enough, 2 Iowa trumpeters attempted to nest south Chillicothe, MO. but they were unsuccessful but it was the first nesting efforts in Missouri for well over a century. If these swans survive until spring 2005, we are hopeful that they will be successful and a "pull off" a Missouri hatch.

One additional note of importance is the fact that several Iowa swans and have nested in southern Minnesota and Wisconsin extending the nesting range several miles south of their states' normal nesting areas. That makes Iowa a major partner in the overall restoration of the Interior Trumpeter Swan population restoration effort.

We know that swans need quality wetlands with lots of aquatic plants and invertebrates to rear their cygnets. Future studies of the Iowa wetlands will be critical to the continued survival and expansion of trumpeter swans in Iowa. Not only will swans benefit from these improvements but all wetland fauna and flora will gain considerably. Efforts must be made to reduce nutrient flow into the wetlands and to keep rough fish, such as carp, at bay from entering the wetlands

destroying the water quality by the rooting and foraging they do. As we march into the future, we hope that not only will we have more nesting trumpeter swans in the state of Iowa, but that wetland water quality will improve and be a springboard for improving water quality that surrounds us all. Water quantity and quality are 2 critical factors that future generations must all be ready to stand up to and find solutions.

+++++

PEREGRINE PATRIARCH DIES IN CEDAR RAPIDS

By Bruce Ehresman

We knew it had to happen but hoped it would not be for several more years. Jodeane Cancilla, Director of the Macbride Raptor Project, reported that the Cedar Rapids peregrine falcon patriarch, 64X, was found dead on the ground in downtown Cedar Rapids on November 24. He was found lying on his back near the Apac Building, about 1 mile from his nest site on the U.S. Bank building. Jodeane said that the bird was examined for cause of death, and bruising was found on his back and on the back of his neck. While a collision cannot be ruled out as cause of death, the injuries are more indicative of those sustained by aerial attack from another peregrine. It is quite likely that 64X met his match and died in an aerial battle defending his downtown Cedar Rapids territory. Jodeane will be watching to see if a new male peregrine has taken over 64X's territory and mate.

Peregrine 64X was originally hacked from a release site in downtown Des Moines in 1991, as part of Iowa's Peregrine Reintroduction Program. He was 13 years old and had nested successfully in Cedar Rapids for 11 years in-a-row, with 36 (including 1 foster) young fledged at that nest site. According to Bud Tordoff, Curator of St. Paul's Bell Museum of Natural History, only one other Midwest peregrine male, Kato 31T, produced more offspring, fathering 41. Peregrine 64X has pretty much been a year-round resident of Cedar Rapids all these years, and local birders could usually locate him on his favorite perch site on the Roosevelt Hotel or other nearby buildings. He will be missed.

The oldest remaining peregrine in Iowa is the 14 year-old male, 93T, in Des Moines. This male appears to still be in top physical shape, since he is defending two territories with two different females in downtown Des Moines.

+++++

FISH/WILDLIFE TAX CHECKOFF- Nongame Wildlife Needs Your Support

By Mark McInroy

Research and habitat management for game species such as deer, turkeys, waterfowl and pheasants are funded through license fees, habitat stamps and income taxes. The Iowa Department of Natural Resources Wildlife Diversity Program represents the more than 80% of Iowa's wildlife that is not hunted. Historically this program has had no stable source of funding and relies mainly on contributions from the public.

To make a contribution to the Wildlife Diversity Program and invest in the future of Iowa's nongame wildlife, remember to give to the Fish/Wildlife Fund (Chickadee Checkoff) on your state income tax form. Your contribution will be used to conduct research and provide habitat management for Iowa's nongame species and promote education and enjoyment of those species to the public.

In recent years, contributions to the Nongame Program were used to conduct research and surveys on Iowa's frogs and toads, wintering bald eagles, heron rookeries, bats, and Iowa's raptors. Public events such as Bald Eagle Appreciation Days, Pelican Fest, and Hawk Watch, which attracted nearly 20,000 people, were also funded through donations. Several publications on the appreciation of Iowa's diverse wildlife and management of it were distributed to thousands of people. With respect to Iowa's wildlife diversity, currently many are the beneficiary of contributions by few.

Research of the Fish/Wildlife Fund (Chickadee Checkoff) shows an average \$11.50 contribution from a mere 1% (approx.) of the population filing income tax. This manner of funding does not match the level of management needed across Iowa. With 45% of Iowa's population over age 16 engaging in wildlife watching activities, there is much funding potential to realize.

Please remember to tell your tax preparer that you would like to contribute to the Fish/Wildlife Fund (Chickadee Checkoff). By donating a few dollars, you will be helping in the conservation of 500+ nongame animals. Invest in Iowa's natural beauty by supporting its wildlife diversity. For more information please contact the Wildlife Diversity Program- 515-432-2823, or Doug.Harr@dnr.state.ia.us.

+++++

CAPITOL PEREGRINES

By Pat Schlarbaum

A second Peregrine Falcon territory in Des Moines has centered activity at state Capitol building. Birders Jay Gilliam, and Sharon and Dick Stilwell identified female falcon, 39E, at the site this summer. This bird fledged in June, 2003 from a smokestack nestbox at NSP Riverside plant near Minneapolis. Falconer and peregrine breeder, Bob Anderson of Raptor

Research Project, Ridgway, Iowa, monitors that site and banded the chick. By autumn 2003 a peregrine was vocalizing at Capitol according to Curt Small, foreman of Neumann Bros. Construction that are refurbishing the Capitol. The building provides many perch sites but, unfortunately, all ledges slope, so eggs roll away and nooks or alcoves for potential peregrine nest site do not exist. In September Curt and his crew constructed and placed a nestbox on NE corner of building. A composite material called Rhino was used for the box that will not stain building's limestone. The Rhino product was donated by Dave Koenig of Leachman Lumber, 1921 Hubbel Ave., Des Moines. Peregrines do not carry nesting material to nest site but create a small depression in rocky substrate to lay eggs. Pea gravel for nest box was provided by Bert Lewell of Hallet Materials, 1300 SE 36th St. Des Moines. A recent visit to nestbox revealed a depression in pea gravel indicating some bird had entered. Also a food cache of birds near box included seven woodcock, among prey species of pigeons and starlings. A noticeable decline in pigeon activity around Capitol has been appreciated.

The male at Capitol site, 93T (released at Cedar Rapids in 1990), is same male that has defended original peregrine nest in Des Moines at American Republic bldg. 601, 6th Ave. since 1993. According to Bud Tordoff that coordinates Midwest Peregrine Recovery, this is third instance that one male has defended two territories with two mates. In November 2003, original female at American Republic was killed in territorial battle with 8/*T that fledged from Colonnade bldg. in Minneapolis in 2001. Three young fledged from American Republic this summer bringing twelve-year total to 27 young.

Around Iowa other peregrine territories include Lansing Bluff, Waukon Jct. Bluff, Burlington, and Chillicothe, near Ottumwa. Sites with success at fledging young were Cedar Rapids (3 yng), Quad Cities (3 yng), Louisa (4 yng), and Des Moines (3 yng).

A big Thank You! to Neumann Brothers, Inc., Leachman Lumber, and Hallet Materials for their contributions to this most interesting peregrine site. Volunteer support at all Peregrine Falcon nesting sites is providing tremendous assistance to this once endangered species. Key volunteers are listed respectively, but no particular order: Theresa Chapel, Steve Atherton, and Jodeane Cancilla, Cedar Rapids; Bob Anderson and Dave Kester, Ridgeway; Lowell Washburn, Clear Lake; Sue Nelson and Joe Bannon, Quad Cities; Paul Burkett, Jane Clark, Curt Small and Mark Willemssen, Des Moines; Jim Haack, Louisa; Judy Johnson and Nelson Hoskins, Chillicothe; and Lee Eberly, Burlington.

+++++

Iowa DNR Wildlife Diversity Program Staff:
Doug Harr, State Coordinator
Bruce Ehresman, Wildlife Biologist
Pat Schlarbaum, Natural Resource Technician
Mark "Mac" McInroy, Natural Resource Technician
With assistance from:
Ron Andrews, Wildlife Biologist
Dave Hoffman, Natural Resource Technician

Federal regulations prohibit discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex or disability. If you believe you have been discriminated against in any program, activity or facility described above, or if you desire further information, please write to: Director, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, Wallace State Office Building, 502 E. Ninth Ave., Des Moines, IA 50319-0034, or the Equal Opportunity Commission, Washington, DC 20240.